Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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R 201635Z APR 77
FM AMCONSUL QUEBEC
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 969
INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMCONSUL MONTREAL
AMCONSUL TORONTO
AMCONSUL WINNIPEG
AMCONSUL HALIFAX

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUEBEC 0162

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, CA
SUBJECT: BRYCE MACKASEY DISCUSSES TRUDEAU STRATEGY

1. FORMER FEDERAL MINISTER AND CURRENT MEMBER OF LIBERAL OPPOSITION IN QUEBEC NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, BRYCE MACKASEY, TOLD ME TODAY THAT HE BELIEVES THERE IS GOOD CHANCE PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU WILL CALL GENERAL ELECTION FOR NEXT SEPTEMBER. IF NOT IN FALL, MACKASEY OPINED THAT JUNE OF 1978 IS MOST LIKELY TIMING FOR NEXT FEDERAL ELECTION.

2. OWL LIKE, MACKASEY KNOWINGLY POINTED TO YESTERDAY'S SPEECH IN MONTREAL BY PREMIER HATFIELD OF NEW BRUNSWICK AS CONTAINING SEEDS OF TRUDEAU STRATEGY. HE SAID PRIME MINISTER WILL PROBABLY CALL FEDERAL/PROVINCIAL CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE SOMETIME AFTER QUEBEC BYELECTION IN MAY ASSUMING LIBERALS EMERGE VICTORIOUS. THIS WOULD PUT PQ "TO TEST," HE ASSERTED. SHOULD LEVESQUE REFUSE TO PARTICIPATE IN CONSTITUTIONAL NEGOTIATIONS, TRUDEAU COULD ACCUSE HIM OF "BREAKING WORD" TO PEOPLE OF QUEBEC WHOM HE HAD PROMISED GOVERN AS ANY OTHER PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT UNDER MANDATE PQ WON
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IN NOVEMBER 15 ELECTION. FOLLOWING LEVESQUE REFUSAL, MACKASEY SAID, TRUDEAU WOULD HAVE ISSUE UPON WHICH TO CALL GENERAL ELECTION.

3. COMMENT: MACKASEY'S "INFORMED GUESS" SEEMS PARTIALLY CONFIRMED BY TRUDEAU HIMSELF IN HIS SPEECH IN WINNIPEG. (WINNIPEG 0137) PRIME MINISTER AGAIN APPEARED BE SUGGESTING NEED FOR A FEDERAL/

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PROVINCIAL NEGOTIATION. SHOULD HE INDEED BE TIMING HIS ANNOUNCEMENT OF CONSTITUTIONAL NEGOTIATIONS, AS MACKASEY SUGGESTS, TO COINCIDE WITH HOPED FOR LIBERAL VICTORIES IN UPCOMING BYELECTIONS, TRUDEAU MAY ALSO BE HOPING PLACE LEVESQUE IN EMBARRASSING SITUATION OF REFUSING NEGOTIATIONS, HOLDING PREMATURE REFERENDUM, OR REFUSING BOTH REGOTIATIONS AND REFERENDUM. IF THIS WHOLE SCENARIO WERE PLAYED OUT, IT WOULD NOT SETTLE CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS, BUT COULD GAIN POINTS FOR FEDERALISTS AND REINFORCE TRUDEAU'S MANDATE AS FEDERALIST CHAMPION.
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